

300/160











LOS ANGELES ART COMMUNITY: GROUP PORTRAIT

Helen Lundeberg

Interviewed by Fidel Danieli

Completed under the auspices  
of the  
Oral History Program  
University of California  
Los Angeles

Copyright © 1982  
The Regents of the University of California



This manuscript is hereby made available for research purposes only. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publication, are reserved to the University Library of the University of California at Los Angeles. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the University Librarian of the University of California at Los Angeles.

\* \* \*

#### LOS ANGELES ART COMMUNITY: GROUP PORTRAIT

This interview is one of a series, entitled "Los Angeles Art Community: Group Portrait," funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and conducted from July 1, 1975 to March 31, 1977 by the UCLA Oral History Program. The project was directed jointly by Page Ackerman, University Librarian, and Gerald Nordland, Director UCLA Art Galleries, and administered by Bernard Galm, Director, Oral History Program. After selection of interview candidates and interviewers, the Program assumed responsibility for the conduct of all interviews and their processing.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction. . . . .	.vi
Interview History. . . . .	xi
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (June 4, 1974). . . . .	1
Anonymous self-presentation--Birth and infancy in Chicago (1908)--Move to Pasadena (1912)-- A California childhood--Early artistic exposure and aptitude--Enrolling in Stickney Memorial Art School--Studying with Lorser Feitelson--The art scene in Los Angeles in the thirties--Early friends in the art community--Exposure of L. A. to modernist developments: the Arensberg collection, foreign visitors, the Copley Gallery--The art market in the thirties--A consistent level of production.	
TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two (June 4, 1974). . . . .	.25
The Works Progress Administration murals: their execution and subsequent preservation (or lack thereof)--Other WPA activities and issues--The Post-Surrealist show in Brooklyn and San Francisco (1936)--"Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism" at the New York Museum of Modern Art (1936-37)--"Americans 1942" at NY-MOMA--Other shows--Small paintings versus big paintings--A succession of styles and series: from Post-Surrealism to hard-edge --Invention rather than abstraction--An ongoing interest in illusion.	
TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (June 4, 1974). . . . .	51
The influence of an artists's environs: Southern California--The <u>Planets</u> series-- Silkscreen--The joy of painting--Sketches as preludes--Working with tape--Color: a limited palette--A dark period--Media and color: from oil to acrylics--"Pictorial structure"--Painting schedule: a daytime artist--Hard-edge takes time--Women's issues--Masculine/feminine--Reading-- Terseness in writing about work--Criticism--	



Jules Langsner--An armchair traveler--Reality  
versus fantasy--Is California a lotus land?--  
Post-Surrealism, surrealism, and magic realism  
--Nostalgia--A curious experience in selling  
a painting.

TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two (June 4, 1974). . . . . 76

A curious experience (continued)--More on  
nostalgia--Some popular resistance to the  
move from nostalgia to hard-edge--Being  
considered a renegade--A consistent tone  
through the entire oeuvre--The influence of  
Cezanne in Southern California--A return to  
figuration?

Index. . . . . 79

Index of works mentioned in the text. . . . .82



## INTRODUCTION

Helen Lundeborg's art throughout a lengthy and diversified career has been saliently marked by unwavering independence and thematic consistency. Her paintings range from the detailed representations of early postsurrealism through dramatically minimal, geometric compositions. Within these stylistic variations, Lundeborg has explored tenaciously her personal concerns: imagination and illusion captured in a classical, rational structure. Through meticulous, formal arrangement, Lundeborg has sought to evoke the enigmatic and the metaphysical.

Born in Chicago in 1908, Lundeborg moved with her family to Pasadena in 1912. She has lived in the Los Angeles area ever since. Although interested in drawing as a child, she did not consider art seriously until a family friend funded her tuition at Stickney Art School, Pasadena, in 1930. There her first instructor was replaced by Lorser Feitelson.

Where Stickney emphasized academic traditions of composition, the dynamic Feitelson taught discussion and graphic analysis of the masters, both Renaissance and modern. He demonstrated the difference between illustration and fine art. In the oral history interview that follows, Lundeborg states, "I was innocent in all



directions anyway as to why art is art, if it is.  
But when Lorser came and began to explain things. . .  
wow! You know, the light dawned."

Feitelson became Lundeberg's mentor--and later her husband.

Lundeberg left Stickney in 1933 and, though just twenty-five years old, emerged as an artist of technical and intellectual maturity. Promptly she was offered a one-person show at the Stanley Rose Gallery in Hollywood and was included in numerous group shows. She moved to Los Angeles to begin work on easel paintings, and later murals, for the Federal Public Works Arts Projects, then locally under the supervision of Stanton MacDonald-Wright. With Feitelson, she became involved in the formulation of postsurrealism.

Postsurrealism was conceived by Feitelson after he had worked in Paris in the 1920s, during the rise of surrealism. Where the surrealists gave free rein to the unconscious in juxtaposing paintings attempting to deny the intellect and recreate the dreamy state of the subconscious mind, the postsurrealists deliberately selected seemingly unrelated objects that, when placed together, achieved a meaning larger than the individual objects.\*

---

\* Nancy Dustin Wall Moure, Painting and Sculpture in Los Angeles, 1900-1945 (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980), p. 62.



In 1934 Lundeberg wrote and published the first postsurrealist manifesto, entitled "New Classicism," and exhibited her first postsurrealist work, Persephone, in the "Eighth Annual Southern California Exhibition of Painting and Sculpture" at the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego. Her theoretical position influenced other artists working in California during the 1930s, including Knud Merrild, Grace Clements, and Lucien Labaudt. As a result of an exhibition of postsurrealist work that traveled east to the Brooklyn Museum in 1935, Lundeberg, Feitelson, and Merrild were included in the "Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism" exhibition held the following year at New York's Museum of Modern Art.

Lundeberg embraced the postsurrealist idiom longer than her contemporaries. It complemented her interest in the metaphysical, the universal mysteries revealed through classical form. A group of her postsurrealist canvases was exhibited in MOMA's "Americans 1942, 18 Artists from 9 States," and she continued to work in that style throughout the decade.

In 1950 Lundeberg painted A Quiet Place, a picture that presaged a new direction toward hard-edge, geometric composition. The carefully placed objects characteristic of her paintings became less important than their settings; her work became nonobjective. She



used geometric areas and shadows cast to create spatial environments. The metaphysical aspect of her work was more suggested than delineated.

At this time, Feitelson, too, was developing a hard-edge style, but their work revealed entirely different motivations. While Feitelson's paintings showed flat, abstract, dynamic forms, Lundeborg's conveyed a sense of illusionistic space through the use of solid rather than plane geometry.

In 1962, works by both artists were included in the major exhibition "Geometric Abstraction in America" at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Nevertheless, Lundeborg rejects any notion that the paintings are literal abstractions. Rather they are all inventions: enigmatic, empty corridors and vast, expansive vistas of land and sea, the interior and exterior spaces of her postsurreal work.

Lundeborg's art continues to evolve cyclically. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, she has often returned to themes and subjects from the earliest years of her career. In 1965, for instance, she revived an early interest in the cosmos with a series of paintings of planets. These works defined the union of opposites, melding the circle of the planets, symbolic of the eternal, with the square of the canvas, symbolic of the transitory.



In 1968 her interest in self-portraiture was manifested in a group of "figure landscapes": bands of color arranged horizontally, evocative of the female torso. From 1970 she concentrated on imagined architectural forms and modular units, and in 1973 she returned to small, still-life landscapes that echo her earliest postsurrealism.

Throughout these myriad stylistic shifts Lundeberg has remained faithful to personal aesthetic concerns; she has sought to assert the presence of the metaphysical by the most logical and rational of means. Figuration or abstraction have existed only as vehicles of her creative intention, her statement. She has avoided formal trends. A distinctly individual artist, Lundeberg seems to have been motivated by the pursuit of aesthetic curiosity itself.

--Hunter Drohojowska, January 1982



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Fidel Danieli, freelance consultant to "L.A. Art Community: Group Portrait," Oral History Program, UCLA. B.A., Art Education, UCLA; M.A., Pictorial Arts, UCLA. Professor of art, Los Angeles Valley Center in Van Nuys, painter, and critic.

### TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Studio/home of Helen Lundeborg and Lorser Feitelson, Los Angeles, California.

Date: June 4, 1974.

Time of day, length of session, total number of recording hours: The interview was recorded in a single afternoon session of two and a half hours.

Persons present during interview: Lundeborg and Danieli.

### CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This oral history interview and Danieli's oral history interviews with Lorser Feitelson and John McLaughlin, all part of the Oral History Program's collection, were actually conducted as part of Danieli's own independent study project, "The Contemporary Art of Los Angeles (1950-70) and Its Relationship to the Special Qualities of the Environment of Southern California," funded by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant. (Thirty artists were interviewed as part of that project.)

Danieli had studied with Lundeborg's husband, Lorser Feitelson, and considered himself a longtime friend of the couple at the time of the interview. No special research or preparation was required for this particular interview session, therefore.

Danieli expected Lundeborg to be reticent about reminiscing, but he reports this did not turn out to be the case.



## EDITING:

Editing was done by Lawrence Weschler, editor, Oral History Program. He checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings and edited for punctuation, paragraphing, correct spelling, and verification of proper nouns. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

The interviewee reviewed and approved the edited transcript.

Hunter Drohojowska wrote the introduction. Other front matter and the index were prepared by Oral History Program staff.

A copy of the Danieli grant proposal is filed in the office of the Oral History Program along with other supporting documents of the Los Angeles Art community project.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 4, 1974

LUNDEBERG: . . . of any great interest, so why fool around with it?

DANIELI: Was that just kind of the policy that you and Lorser established, because his is fairly brief, the same way.

LUNDEBERG: Yeah. Well, we both feel that private lives are private lives, and that there's just too much pandering to the curiosity that people have. Of course, some artists have had adventurous and exciting lives, and perhaps it's worthwhile going into that; perhaps it means something in particular in regard to their work. But anyway, we've sort of stuck to that--[laughter] the brief biography, list of exhibitions, and so forth.

DANIELI: Because it presents you in a very kind of anonymous, but very professional, way. It's an interesting kind of stance to take, I think. It's also curious that you bothered to give your birthdate [June 24, 1908], because most women won't.

LUNDEBERG: Well, Fidel, I started doing that when I didn't care who knew when I was born, you see, so I'm stuck with it. I might just as well come out with it every time anybody asks because they can find out if I don't tell them.

DANIELI: Okay. And do you remember anything of Chicago?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, I remember very little. I was four and a half



when my family moved out here, and they came out in December, I think, 1912. And I have just little vignette, fragmentary memories, you know. I was thinking about that today, apropos of this whole subject of what it means to be an artist working in Los Angeles and so forth. After all, Los Angeles is the West; it's Pacific Coast. In Pasadena, I grew up with mountains before me and a big meadow across the street and so on. And all my memories of Chicago, except maybe one, are of interiors. It's all very closed in. My mother [Selma Edmund Lundeberg] used to say that. . . . At that time in Chicago, there'd been a lot of kidnappings, and people with small children were terrified that their children would be snatched away if they weren't kept under close supervision and in their own yards--not only in their own yards but with someone to keep an eye on them. So we lived in a flat building; I don't know whether it was two or three stories high, but each floor was a home. And one funny memory I have is of going out--we were up above the ground floor, I know--and there was a big porch on the back, and it seemed to be open, except that it had a railing. And a woman came out on the porch of the next building (and you know there probably wasn't more than that much space between the buildings), and she had a present for me. She gave it to me by putting it on the end of an umbrella. It was tied in a paper with a string,



and she hooked the umbrella into this and reached it across to me. I think it was a little set of dishes. I don't know whatever happened to them. But I remember that--I mean, just a vignette, you know. I don't know who she was or why she gave me a present, but I remember this thing with the umbrella and the parcel tied with a string. Other little things--I seem to remember falling into a snowdrift once--but not much outdoor stuff, you know. Mostly just indoors.

DANIELI: Was there an official reason or set of reasons your family came to California?

LUNDEBERG: The main reason was my mother's health.

Chicago has a fierce climate. They also, at that time, were having those black fogs, fog cum coal dust, coal smoke. Every winter she'd have this terrible bronchitis, and the doctor said, "You'd better get out of here while the going's good." She'd already had some trouble as a young girl with bronchitis or some kind of lung congestion that hung on and hung on and hung on and was finally cured. And my father [Frederick Lundeborg] had a cousin who already lived in Pasadena who wrote glowingly about Pasadena and the sunshine and so forth and so on. So we just picked up and moved.

DANIELI: And what is it that your father did?

LUNDEBERG: Well, at that time he worked for Hart, Shaffner



& Marx. I mean, he started out as a bookkeeper, and he was doing very well there. But then he worked with the Kendall Company in Pasadena, and he became one of the officers of the company--I don't know--assistant treasurer or something like that. They dealt in real estate and stocks and so on.

DANIELI: What about early memories, then, of Pasadena?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, lovely. Except for the first, I don't know, I think the first week. Was it a week? Three weeks? I don't know. It rained and it rained and it rained. You know, it was December.

DANIELI: Oh, you hit one of those.

LUNDEBERG: It was very discouraging. Until we could find a house, we were staying on the upper floor--it must have been right under the roof--of this relative's house. And nothing but rain. [laughter] But I remember the morning we came in because we got up very early. It must have been seven o'clock in the morning. It hadn't begun to rain then; the sun was shining, and there were orange groves, which I'd never seen before. I have a nice little, just a little vignette memory of that. Also, the relatives must have thought that we'd been starving all the way from Chicago. It took--I don't know--three days and two nights, something like that, on the train. And they must have thought that we would be starved, so they had an enormous breakfast; it was like a dinner. I remember this table spread with



everything. It's real Swede style, I guess. But then we found a little house up in what was then the northeast part of Pasadena. It's more built up now, spread all over the place, and it's gone to pot. It isn't what it used to be. It was really lovely then.

DANIELI: Up towards Altadena, or Sierra Madre?

LUNDEBERG: Yes. Above Washington Street about two blocks, I think, which isn't Altadena yet, but it's fairly far north. And about a short block east of where our house was, the sidewalks ended; it became practically country. Some neighbors down there had a goat they pastured. There was a whole square block--it seemed more like two square blocks, you know, enormous (maybe because I was a child, and small, it seemed bigger than it was), but at least it was a square block--of just open field, you know, that in the spring was filled, just loaded with poppies and blue-eyed grass. We'd go over there and pick great bunches of them to bring into the house.

DANIELI: Then you mentioned the mountains.

LUNDEBERG: And the mountains, of course, rising up because there weren't any tall buildings to interfere. Yeah, I really grew up with the sight of the mountains. Didn't get into them much because my family were not hikers, but they were always in sight. And to this day, north is up and south is down to me because that's the way Pasadena runs.



But it was really a lovely place for a child to grow up. It wasn't the country, but it was darn near it. There was really sort of a rural feeling about it.

DANIELI: From what I understand of the publicity of the time and the aims of any number of people that did community planning, that was the whole aim--to make city life somehow rural.

LUNDEBERG: Yeah. Well, nobody ever plans anything well enough, or the plans are thrown aside at some point, because Pasadena's much more built up now. Huh, it isn't safe to walk on Colorado Street at night any more. I guess it isn't anywhere. When my sister and I were in our teens, we'd go for walks on a late Sunday afternoon and come home after dark, and no one ever thought [anything] of our going out and wandering all over the neighborhood. It was an all-residential neighborhood. There was no thought that anybody would do us any harm. But I remember that first little house very well. And the funny thing is, I remember the outdoors much better than the interior. I remember the yard; I remember the field across the street; I remember the street itself (it was lined with big pepper trees). I don't remember much about the interior of the house. [phone rings; tape recorder turned off]

DANIELI: Were there members of your family who were involved with art or artistically inclined?



LUNDEBERG: Well, yes and no. My father, when he was about twenty, took some painting lessons; and it seems to me there were two paintings of his we had in the house, but I can remember definitely only one because it always hung over the piano. For the product of a young man--I don't know, it may have been copied from something, but I've never seen the original--it was very well done. It was a very melancholy Victorian scene of a girl on a boat in a marshy place, with a gray sky, rather low-key color. My sister still has it. But that was just a sometime thing. And I guess he either followed his parents' dictates or the dictates of his own sense and went to business school. And that was the end of his painting. But no, there were no artists in the family, no special background.

DANIELI: Were you involved with art or recognized as being artistic as a child?

LUNDEBERG: Yes. But, you know, all children make drawings. And we were encouraged, my sister [Inez S. Lundeborg] and I--she's three years younger than I am--we were encouraged in this not only by our parents, who saved our little scribbles, but by the fact that we had had neighbors who had two girls also, a little older than ourselves, and they were great ones for making drawings. The older girl loved to tell stories about the people she drew. I have seen, a long time ago, a book by Helga Eng on children's drawings--



maybe you know that one?

DANIELI: I know one like it.

LUNDEBERG: I looked at them, and I said, "Well, there we are, you know." I mean, they all draw the same sorts of things at the same ages, more or less--three-year-old children, four-year-old children, and so on. I think my sister still has some of those. We drew mostly on the cards that came in shredded-wheat packages. [laughter] They were just the right size, you know.

But, oh, I don't know, I took a couple of art courses in high school and didn't find much satisfaction there. I think art courses in those days were pretty dull. Of course, a lot depends on the teacher. I had one teacher whom I liked, and who liked me, who was very encouraging. That was the class in which we started out by drawing cones and cubes and cylinders in a very stylized, prescribed method, you know, line and shading with little dashing lines. But finally, at the end of the semester, we got to drawing still life and flowers, and that I enjoyed. But there isn't any special background there, any more than many young people take art courses in school because they're considered snap courses, not because they have any special interest.

DANIELI: When did you decide that you did have a special interest?

LUNDEBERG: Well, you know, I really sort of fell into it.



Well, I was interested. I made sheets of little drawings of imaginary heads and so forth, and even did a little soap carving. And innocent people who know nothing about art look at these things and think they're wonderful. And at the end of junior college, when it was uncertain when I could go on and finish college (because that was the time of the great crash, the Depression, and so on, things were rather bad, looked uncertain, and I had two more years to finish), a friend of the family [Helen Leddy] said, "Why don't you send her to"--she thought these little drawings and carvings and things I made were wonderful--"why don't you send her to art school for a while, until you decide where she should go to finish?" And there was a school in Pasadena called the Stickney [Memorial] Art School, which has long since vanished. She said, "I'll give her a sort of scholarship." So I went. But, you know, it wasn't really planned. It came suddenly. Of course, I'd been thinking about it. In fact, I think I'd sent for some catalogs of eastern art schools; I don't remember which ones now. But that seemed out of reach. That was too far and too much. And I had read a couple of biographies or autobiographies of artists in the Saturday Evening Post or the Ladies' Home Journal, or something or other. But it was all sort of foggy and confused, and nobody was very knowledgeable about the whole thing in our family.



DANIELI: Where had you gone to junior college?

LUNDEBERG: Pasadena [City College].

DANIELI: I didn't know you had gone there. That's where Edie [Danieli] and I went.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, did you? Oh, well, long time after I did. I don't know what it's like now. Is it still a junior college?

DANIELI: Um-hmm.

LUNDEBERG: The campus on Colorado Street, east of Hill Avenue? I think they've put up some new buildings there. It all looked different the last time I went by.

DANIELI: I think it may be that the art department has gotten a few more rooms, but all of that took place even after we were there. They built some buildings and moved some of the other classes into those buildings, so the art department got to spread out a little bit, got a little bit more space.

LUNDEBERG: Um-hmm.

DANIELI: And where was that art school, the Stickney. . . ?

LUNDEBERG: The Stickney School of Art. It was at the point where Lincoln Avenue took off from Fair Oaks. There was a sort of triangular plot of ground there, and on that was a building which I think had been a Shakespeare clubhouse. That's what it looked like. It was an Englishy-looking structure, draped in ivy. There was a big fireplace in the main classroom. It was really a charming old place--



gone to seed somewhat, but anyway, it was a nice place for a. . . .

DANIELI: Do you remember any of the people who taught there?

LUNDEBERG: Well, my first instructor there was Lawrence Murphy, who was my only instructor there except Lorser. Lawrence Murphy went off for the summer to Mexico, after I'd been going for about three months, I guess, and Lorser took over his class--classes, I should say, because his classes were figure drawing and, on Saturday morning, a composition class. So Lorser took over everything that Murphy had been doing. I never had any other teacher. There were some other people who taught there off and on, design classes, but that didn't interest me. I never did like what they called design--lettering, decorative design, and all this sort of thing; I got enough of that in high school. Let's see, someone named Jean Abel was a teacher there, and I think Grace Clements taught a class there at some time. You know of Grace?

DANIELI: I know of the name because you mentioned that she was a very important critic, and then Peter Krasnow mentioned it.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, Grace and Peter were old friends. Well, anyway, my impression--I may be wrong--is that she did have a class there at some time.



DANIELI: What year was that?

LUNDEBERG: Nineteen thirty. Just forty-four years ago.

[laughter] Yes, indeed.

DANIELI: And did you stay at the school long?

LUNDEBERG: Until sometime in 1933, I think. By that time I was already exhibiting a painting here and there, and that was the last of art school for me. Oh, my. What a thrill when Lorser took over that composition class!

Murphy--aagh. Murphy taught [George] Bridgman drawing.

All right, Bridgman drawing won't hurt you if you don't get too much of it. (Well, I knew a woman who never recovered from it. She tried so hard to make her figures work, but they always looked like collections of boxes with arms and legs. That was the typical Bridgman sort of thing.) Anyway, I had a bit of Bridgman. But Murphy--we'd bring in our little. . . . It was supposed to be composition for illustration class, really. My family thought I was going to be an illustrator when I started to go to art school.

[laughter] So did I, as a matter of fact. But we'd put all our little things--our little sketches, drawings, little things, whatever they were--up on the board in the front of the classroom for him to crit. I never could make head or tail of his crits because he'd say--just about like this--"Oh, that's very good, very well done, nice arrangement there." Or he'd say, "That's not so good." But that's all



I ever got out, and I never could figure out why it was good or bad. He never talked about principles of composition, so that I never could make anything of it. Of course, I was innocent in all directions anyway as to why art is art, if it is. But when Lorser came and began to explain things, to make diagrams and to give us principles of different kinds of constructions--[whistles] wow, you know, light dawned! It was really very exciting. [silence]

You'll have to ask me questions, because either I'll go on forever, or I won't say a word.

DANIELI: I didn't know. I was leaving a space there in case you were to go on some more.

LUNDEBERG: No.

DANIELI: There's a person who's doing research, I guess it's at the County Museum, and she did a book recently on art clubs in Southern California.

LUNDEBERG: That's Nancy [Dustin Wall] Moure, however she pronounces her name. [The Dictionary of Art and Artists in Southern California before 1930 (1975)]

DANIELI: And I was wondering if you remember about groups or organizations during that period. I know you belonged to several, and evidently, because your name's listed there, you had things down at the County Museum.

LUNDEBERG: Right. Well, I did belong to one or two just very briefly, but really, I'm not--I never was a joiner in



school, and I wasn't after that, either. Yes, I know that my name is listed there, and I've wondered about some of those things because I've sort of forgotten about them. But some of those organizations, years ago, were sort of temporary things. A bunch of artists got together and said, "Let's have a show"--something called Independent Artists, I think--"with no holds barred." And they gave themselves a name and organized an exhibition, possibly two exhibitions, and then it fell apart. That would be the end of it. I know I was involved in some things like that. But I really, you know--I'd have to see the material to remember what it was all about. I don't remember them.

DANIELI: What about occasions to show or opportunities to show in that period, let's say the mid-thirties, when you were starting.

LUNDEBERG: Well, of course, at that time there was still the annual show at the County Museum. I submitted paintings to that in the middle thirties and after that, of course. That was that. And there were various other--they weren't very great occasions, but there were various little. . . . I have some old clippings about having a show or a painting in this or that, as early as 1933. In fact, I think I exhibited one of my first paintings in, must have been 1931, at the latest. But there were various opportunities--really, I'd say just as many as there are now, because we no



longer have that annual show. There's the Barnsdall show, to which anyone can. . . . And then, of course, there are various, more little museums around the periphery that have shows, like the Long Beach [Museum of Art] and which other ones, I don't know. But it's become rather expensive for a beginning artist to submit to a lot of shows: the entry fees have become higher, the transportation is more expensive, and so on. Well, of course, there are more artists--they've grown with the rest of the population out here--so that for what opportunities there are, only a percentage can take advantage of them anyway.

DANIELI: Talking about during that period, say, the mid-thirties, what about people you and Lorser would have encountered as friends, people that you knew in the art world?

LUNDEBERG: I'm trying to remember when I met Peter; I think Lorser knew the Krasnows before that time. And I remember Boris Deutsch, although I can't say that he was specially a friend.

DANIELI: Okay.

LUNDEBERG: Funny how these things get lost in the fog; you don't think about them anymore.

DANIELI: I think that what I'm driving for is, was there a large community? Did you have a number of people that you knew? Or was that not important? It seems to me that it was not important.



LUNDEBERG: Well, Los Angeles has always been a scattered sort of place, and people who had. . . . Now, the California Art Club existed. But they were so academic in their outlook that we took no interest in their doings. And while we were acquainted with some of the people that belonged to it, they weren't specially friends, and we didn't do anything together. Let's see. Still in the thirties. In connection with the Post-Surrealist group, there was [Knud] Merrild, who got interested in that, although he was basically a more abstract sort of artist. But he was interested in the subjective classicism aspect of it. And then Lucien Labaudt from San Francisco was a great friend and exhibited with our group down here. This would be around 1935, '36, perhaps. (Don't depend too much on my dates because I get a little foggy about them. I have material where these things could be looked up, but I forget whether it was this year or that.) And Grace Clements, who at first fought our ideas and then came over to our side and exhibited with the group. Let's see. Well, Jules Langsner, who was then very young (I think maybe only twenty-one), wrote some little brochure articles for the. . . . He was very much interested at that time. And of course we knew both [Reuben] Kadish and Philip Guston (who was then Philip Goldstein), who were students of Lorser's. They were very young also. But that was just



before the. . . . They weren't involved in the Post-Surrealist thing. But these were some of the younger, coming-up people, and they had nothing to do with the organized groups like the California Art Club and the Painters and Sculptors [Club] and so forth, although, you know, we were acquainted with some of those people and I don't remember just when. There were people around, like [Emil] Kosa [Jr.] and Paul Lauritz--and who else? I can't think of any other names at the moment--who were still doing the California landscape thing and thought that all abstract art was wild, still. It was a backward sort of thing. And they were much more numerous, of course, than the people who were doing more contemporary things in this town.

DANIELI: Where would someone working in the contemporary style then have gotten their information? Would there have been that many shows to see in Los Angeles on the West Coast?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, shows. And of course there are all those books and magazines. I don't remember what shows there were. Well, of course, Lorser put on shows here in the middle thirties of things that I'm sure had never been seen in Los Angeles before. But it was too soon; it was too soon. It was interesting only to a small group of people. Of course [Walter] Arensberg was already up there on Hillside Avenue with his marvelous collection of things.



But he was sort of a rare bird at that time.

DANIELI: Were you ever there, to the house?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, yes. Many times. It seems to me not quite as early as that. Perhaps Lorser was, but I don't remember it at that time--a little bit later than that. Oh, yes, yes. And every time we would go to that house, there was something new to see--not because he'd acquired a lot of new things but because you couldn't look at everything. I don't suppose you were ever there before that house was--no, it's been a long time now. But the walls were hung thick. They had, on one end wall of the living room, one of those marvelous big de Chiricos: the arches, the reclining statue, I think, with little trains choo-chooing off in the distance. He had everybody. He had surrealists and cubists. He had quite a number of [Marcel] Duchamps. All that collection that's gone to the Philadelphia Museum [of Art]. It's a pity it couldn't have stayed here. And up the staircase wall, and into the rooms upstairs, and in the dining room--the whole house was a museum. And there was so much to see that you couldn't take it all in at once, so you were always discovering new things. And then, of course, he had some [Constantin] Brancusi and a lot of pre-Columbian things and so on. It was really marvelous.

DANIELI: I would assume that Philadelphia has all sorts of



photo documentation. I wonder if anybody out here has any photos of the house.

LUNDEBERG: I really don't know. I don't know. I'll tell you who might have (because after all they bought the house and did it over) is the Stendahls. If you're interested in that, you could just inquire. And if they don't have it, they might know who has, you know, if everything didn't go to Philadelphia, because they were next-door neighbors for so many years. And many of the things that Arensberg had, I think, he bought through Earl Stendahl. Now, of course, it's the Stendahl Gallery, that same house, but greatly changed.

DANIELI: What about visitors to Los Angeles? Any important artist that you remember either coming through and being lionized or spending time here? I was surprised--all these things come as a surprise to me because I'm just finding them now--I was surprised to find out that Max Ernst lived and worked in Santa Monica apparently for some time.

LUNDEBERG: He did? When was that? Oh, maybe that was when Peggy [Guggenheim] had a house down there, in Santa Monica. That must have been in the early forties--maybe during the war. I didn't meet him at that time. I met him later when he had a show, probably at the Copley Gallery in Beverly Hills. I know he was out here later, but I didn't meet him at the time when he was here in the forties.



Yes, that makes sense. I hadn't thought about that.

We met Carlos Merida in the middle thirties, about 1936, I would say. I seem to remember that he was rather deaf, but he was a lively and amusing sort of person. One funny little--he had a show of things at that little gallery in Hollywood, and he had a little hobby. This show that was on the wall was a mixed show, you know: there was a Picasso and a Juan Gris and so forth and so on. And he went around with a little pad of paper and a pencil, and what he was doing was copying the signatures. He would have made a marvelous forger! It amused him, you know. Well, I've never forgotten that. Just a little silly thing. DANIELI: Did you know William Copley when he was out here, the person who had the gallery?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, yes, yes. Down on, I think it was, Canon Drive, in Beverly Hills, in a bungalow. Yes, it was in a little house, you know. I don't remember the address now, but yes, we have some of his [catalogs]. We have quite a few of [them]. He put out beautiful catalogs. He had Ernst, and he had a [René] Magritte show. Did he have [Yves] Tanguy? I can't remember. He had a Matta [Echaurren] show, I think. He had all the things that most of Los Angeles wasn't ready for. Yes, we knew him. And he had a partner named Ployard, John Ployard, at that time. I don't know in what way he was a partner, you know, whether



monetarily or just--anyway, he was involved in it.

DANIELI: Do you know if that person's still around?

Because I've never heard that name before.

LUNDEBERG: I haven't heard of him in years. I don't know what's happened to him. Copley, of course, is in New York. We just saw his daughter, Claire Copley, up the street the other day. Talked to her a bit. It's the first time we'd been in the gallery. But no, we knew Bill quite well at that time. Lorser lectured on some of his shows there, you know, little gallery lectures. Gave him a lot of good advice, which he didn't take, about how to keep the gallery going without spending all your money the first year, you know. But of course he paid no attention to that. I don't know. I think he put, I don't know, like \$60,000, \$70,000 into that gallery, which--I don't believe that it existed for even a whole year. It seemed a very short time. And it was too bad, because he'd brought beautiful shows. He had more Max Ernsts there--which he brought from Europe--he had more paintings than he could hang on the walls. That was a very interesting show. I don't know. I think he lost interest; he felt he was wasting his time. He didn't get enough response from people here. So he called Lorser one day, took him out to lunch, and said, "I have sad news for you. I'm going to close the gallery." So that was the end of that.



DANIELI: Do I remember--I was kind of confused, but I thought Duchamp's name came somehow into Lorser's being involved in having, or showing art here. Was it that Duchamp was handling sales in New York, or what kind of arrangement was that? Do you know? He was serving as an agent or something?

LUNDEBERG: Yes. As I remember, the connection was not directly with Duchamp but with a man named. . . . What's his name now? Isn't that stupid? It'll come to me.

[Howard Putzel] This man had a little gallery in San Francisco in the Paul Elder Bookshop. His name will come to me in a moment. But he got many things through Duchamp, and we had a relationship with him where he sent things to us. Lorser may have had some direct connection with Duchamp, but I don't remember that. I wish I could remember that man's name.

DANIELI: I think maybe Lorser had mentioned Duchamp in a relationship, somehow, but I think it was maybe even two or three years ago. We were talking at a show of the L.A. Art Association. It just went by, and I thought of it later.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, well, I think it was indirect, but Duchamp did act as an agent for certain European artists, and Duchamp made himself a little something by selling the works of other people, or arranging for them to get sold.

DANIELI: I know he is credited with being responsible for



arranging the first major Brancusi show in New York.

LUNDEBERG: Um-hmm. I wouldn't be surprised, although I don't remember that. That's probably documented somewhere because there are more books on Duchamp and his activities than you can remember. Now what was his brother's name? [Jacques] Villon. Because we had in that little gallery in Hollywood etchings of Villon, for instance, which I think you could have bought for \$10 or \$15; and a Juan Gris show where the most expensive thing was, I don't know, \$200, \$300, \$400; and the Klee show, which came from Galka Scheyer. Nobody was interested. You could have bought beautiful Klees for \$60. But there just wasn't the audience. It was too small. Many of the people who were interested didn't even have \$60 to spend recklessly. So it was fun, but it was in one way a wasted enterprise because not enough people got anything out of it.

DANIELI: Have you painted consistently, then, since the thirties, or have there ever been periods where you did not work or did not paint?

LUNDEBERG: No, there haven't really been periods when I didn't paint. The tempo of work comes and goes. I used to work more slowly than I do now. There were times when I didn't produce very many paintings within a year, but there was always something going. I never stopped painting, I suppose.



DANIELI: I was curious if your painting had ever been interrupted by doing other things or doing other work?

LUNDEBERG: No, not really, because while I was working for the [Works Progress Administration's] Art Project, I was still painting in my own studio, on my own; less, perhaps. But after all, the art project work was like going to the office. You went every day and did your thing. You didn't take any homework.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JUNE 4, 1974

DANIELI: During that period of the works project, what sort of public things did you do? You did some large-scale things, didn't you?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, yes. I don't know if you saw all that stuff in the newspapers a year or so ago, I guess it was, about saving the murals in the Hall of Records? Have they demolished that? I know there was talk about it for a year, and then finally the moment had come.

DANIELI: Oh, I saw that article.

LUNDEBERG: Well, two of the murals which they took off the wall and preserved somewhere--I don't know what they've done with them--were mine. Those were the first murals I ever did on my own. I had worked as an assistant on some murals that Lorser did for the Hooper Avenue--no, for the Edison School.

DANIELI: Do you know if those are still around?

LUNDEBERG: I don't know. I don't know. Some of these things have just disappeared.

DANIELI: Were your murals done directly on the wall, or were they mounted?

LUNDEBERG: Those murals at the Hall of Records were done on canvas, in the studio, and then mounted on the wall. That's why they could take them off, you know, roll them up, I



suppose, and put them away somewhere. I don't know what they intend to do with them. But there's been a great deal of interest lately in preserving those Federal Art Project things, whereas for years. . . .

I heard of one mural of mine that was done on the wall in the Fullerton City Hall, and a friend of ours, who lives down in Fullerton, told me--with grief she said, "They have whitewashed your mural." The police department took over that room; it had been the supervisor's hearing room or something like that, whatever they have in a city hall. It was a beautiful little building, with a carved door, and leather, and all that stuff, Spanish style. This police department took over that section, and they didn't want any murals on the wall. Now, you see, I'm sure that was an illegal act, but nobody's going to make any fuss about it. So, so much for that.

But that was done on the wall, and so were some murals in the Venice High School library. I don't know if they still exist or not. I haven't heard that they don't. Oh, we called it a vignette style. See, they had acoustic plaster, the walls, and you don't want to cover that over with canvas; you spoil the acoustic properties of the wall. So the wall would be tinted a pinkish beige, or it was a pale neutral green at the Venice library. And the artist designed for that wall, incorporating the wall color. What the mural was



was little vignettes. Oh, it was a historical subject, you know, California history, California--I don't remember what its special angle was. But I know there were Indians in it, and there was a little--what?--maybe trains, boats, people, God knows what, included in the subject matter. But it was done with line and tone, and the light in the modeling was supplied by the wall color. So the whole thing had a very open, airy sort of effect. It didn't have the heaviness of the conventional mural. It was done in oil paint, but on this acoustic wall. And the effect was quite nice. It was a nice decorative sort of way of doing a mural.

The last one I did, I finished just before the projects closed up. We were already at war; this was the end of 1942. The last ones were done in the--what's that building called?--Patriotic Hall, down on Figueroa Street, near Washington. The building's still there, I know, but I haven't been in it; so probably the murals are still there. It was on a floor that was occupied, I think, by the American Legion--some kind of public building with a patriotic orientation. It's a tall building. I don't know how many stories there are. It stands up like that because there's nothing else. I think there are car lots and heaven knows what, you know, on Figueroa, down there.

DANIELI: With that balcony out on the tenth floor, or



whatever it is.

LUNDEBERG: Yeah, it's a funny-looking thing, especially standing up there all by itself, you know, instead of amongst other tall buildings. But anyway, these were lunettes: they were about twelve feet high from the bottom to the top of the arch. We did three, and there were more projected, but then the projects ended, and the work had to stop. But those were done on the wall also, in that same. . . .

We got that down to such a system that we did it in an incredibly short time. Of course, all the preliminary work was done before, you know. I had made color sketches to scale; they had to be approved. Then we did the full-scale cartoons. But once that was traced on the wall, then my assistants came in there, and it was very easy to. . . . What I didn't like about the whole thing was that I did less painting than just watching them to see that they didn't do anything horrendous. One well-meaning assistant got so absorbed in what he was doing, he carried a color all the way down the wall. We had a hell of a time getting it off. He wasn't paying attention. [laughter] It was fun, though. It was a marvelous experience, really. I can't say I think too much of a lot of those things that resulted from it, but it was. . . .

DANIELI: Did you like the things you did?



LUNDEBERG: At the time I liked them well enough. I don't have much desire to go back and look at them again. You know, there's something very stymieing about. . . . In the first place, your subject matter is assigned to you. Then you know that it's going to have to be approved by nonart people; the sponsors of the thing have to like it, or at least they can find fault with it. And then you don't do the whole thing yourself, either. And there's no chance for reconsideration. You make the sketch and it's approved. You make the cartoon from that, and of course you could make little adjustments, but. . . . And then, in order to give work to more people, you have to have--I think I had four assistants on that job. So that's why it was worked out to such a system. I had one assistant who mostly spent his time mixing and tubing the colors. They were keyed, you know. The darkest tone, the lighter tone, the line colors for each figure--and of course it was all keyed to the color sketch, so that it was quite easy to lay out the work. And, of course, I did some of the painting. But it seems to me, looking back, that I spent more time just supervising the assistants than I did painting.

I did some other things for the projects, too; I did some lithographs at one time. That was before all the mural designing. Oh, yes, and it's interesting: Lynton Kistler--you must know who he is; he's been a lithograph printer in



Los Angeles since, I don't know how long. He goes way back; he's one of the old-timers. He still has his lithographic printing shop, down on Washington, I think. But anyway, he has a hobby project now (it seems to be a sort of hobby with him). I don't know what he's going to do with it. He's going around and photographing all the project murals, or public murals anyway, that he can find around town. And he said he'd been out at Centinela Park photographing my wall out there. There's a wall that goes along one side of the park (and I think it goes around a corner), which is still there. That was done in what the project called Petrachrome. Petrachrome is really--it's a kind of terrazzo, you know, aggregate in cement, and it can be colored. You can use colored aggregate, crushed stone, and color in the cement. And instead of being used on floors, it was made in panels which could be set upright against a wall, as a decorative thing. This whole wall, which is, I think, 140 feet long, is made of Petrachrome panels. Of course, it had to be made in panels that were manageable; they were probably 4 or 5 feet by, I think, 7 or 8 feet tall, this wall. And that was done from my design. I also did some other, smaller Petrachrome projects for a couple of schools, one out in the Valley, Canoga Park; and one at Washington High School, which is somewhere south of here on the west side of town. I haven't seen that wall in



many years now, but Lynton said it looked pretty good. He'd taken some photographs of it, and he wanted some information about it, which is how I happened to hear about it. Of course, my work on those things went as far as, well, the colored sketches to scale, the full-scale cartoon, and approving the colors as they mixed them to pour; then the Petrachrome crews did the rest because it was a cement-pouring job. The thing was done in reverse, you know, face down; that face polished, when it was hard, and they could turn it over; and then they were affixed in order to the wall. It's not abstract--it's figurative--because the subject matter given me was the history of transportation in Southern California. It goes all the way from the native Indians on foot to the airplane. It was fun; it was fun to do the research; I always enjoyed that part of it.

DANIELI: I had imagined that you did easel painting, which you did not do.

LUNDEBERG: I did do some easel paintings.

DANIELI: Okay. That's why I put it at the beginning (had you done any large projects?), but it sounds like you did more of that than anything else.

LUNDEBERG: Well, the first things I did for the art project--and that was the original one, which opened up here in 1934 in Southern California, in Los Angeles--I did a couple of easel paintings which went to a school out on



the northeast side of town, John Marshall, I think. I haven't seen them since. But one had to do with--well, they both had to do with pioneers. I don't know; there were covered wagons and people putting up buildings in it. They were fair-sized canvases. Then I think I worked as an assistant on a mural that Lorser was doing for one of the high schools. Then I was given those Hall of Records things to do. But somewhere in there I worked also for a little while in the easel-painting section of the art projects. I actually had to go to the project premises and work there. There was a whole section where people sat around painting at their little easels. [laughter] We were allowed to do our own thing, you know. I don't know. There's something discouraging about that kind of--working in a place that's as public as that doesn't appeal to me. I didn't mind doing lithographs there. I worked in the lithographic department for a while and made several lithographs. But then I got involved in the mural thing, and that was the end of all those other activities.

DANIELI: I don't know that I've ever understood the structure of the organization of the project. I've heard that Stanton MacDonald-Wright headed it. Is it that he headed it for a while? And then I've heard that Al King was involved with it somehow, at kind of a supervisor's level.



LUNDEBERG: Well, Al King may have been a supervisor in the-- see, there were different departments, each of which had a supervisor. And Al King was involved with mosaics. That enormous mosaic at Long Beach, I think, was more his project than Stan's, but I don't remember the ins and outs of that. Lorser supervised the mural department and the easel-painting department. That was all under his direction. DANIELI: Was it that Stanton MacDonald-Wright was earlier, or over everyone. . . ?

LUNDEBERG: No, they were there at the same time, but Stanton was. . . . You know, he was a rather quarrelsome person, and he was always opening his mouth and putting his foot in it, [laughter] so that I think at one point he was sort of kicked upstairs. He sat there at a desk, and he was officially. . . . But he wasn't very active in the actual supervising of projects and so forth. Well, they had all sorts of people working for the projects. There was one man who did nothing but go out and contact possible sponsors. He was a salesman, really; basically, that's what he was. He was a nut. But he was very good at this. And he knew how to get along with, oh, I don't know, high school principals, army people. Some of the things went into the training camps that were all over the place-- the war was just about on by that time. Well, the project went on after Pearl Harbor Day for a whole year because they



had all these projects to finish up, all these things. See, it was a matter of the institution putting up so much money and the federal government putting up so much money for these things. I don't remember now what the proportion was; Lorser could tell you that. The projects themselves went through various reorganizations. Let's see, there was the PWAP [Public Works of Art Project], the WPA-FAP, and I don't know, the federal works project; I don't remember what they were. It was separate from the Treasury art project, which commissioned post office murals all over the country. That was a separate thing entirely: that was an agency which commissioned individual artists to do these post office murals, some of which still exist. You know, Boris Deutsch did one for the Terminal Annex post office. I don't know whether that's still there or not.

DANIELI: I don't know either. I think it is.

LUNDEBERG: I don't know why it shouldn't be. I don't imagine that building has changed, and since it's a federal building, they wouldn't just destroy it. It's federal property.

DANIELI: I was surprised, I think it was a month ago, to read that article on Maynard Dixon, the western artist, in Westways magazine. They said that he'd done a big painting of a herd of Palominos that's in the Canoga Park post office. It's like, who knows where all that stuff is?



LUNDEBERG: No, these things have just been sort of lost to notice, and how would younger people know? If they see it--if they notice it--they see a mural in a post office and don't think about how it got there. But an awful lot of those things were done during that period, from the beginning of Roosevelt's presidency right down into the time of World War II. That was how many years?

DANIELI: Ten years.

LUNDEBERG: About ten years.

DANIELI: Then, as I understand it historically, the show that you were in at the Museum of Modern Art, "Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism," was a very important show [1936-37].

LUNDEBERG: Yes, there are about three editions of that catalog. Yes, I would say that it was considered an important show.

DANIELI: Do you remember what it was like to be involved with that or be asked to be involved with it? What was the machinery involved there? You were just contacted, and you sent a painting. Or was it more interesting than that?

LUNDEBERG: I don't remember the machinery of it at all. Of course, I was delighted to be invited, but I don't remember now how it came about. It probably came about because our Post-Surrealist group got together a show which went to the Brooklyn Museum and was there for about, I



don't know, about five months. They held it over. It created quite a lot of interest. And it was also shown at the San Francisco Museum of Art. But I don't even remember which came first. ["Post-Surrealism" (1936)]

DANIELI: The Post-Surrealist was first, and then the Fantastic. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Yes, I mean I don't remember whether it was shown first in San Francisco and then in Brooklyn, or vice versa. But yes, the Post-Surrealist show came first. And that is undoubtedly why somebody in New York knew that we existed.

DANIELI: Do you know of other Los Angeles artists that were in that Museum of Modern Art show?

LUNDEBERG: Well, Lorser, of course.

DANIELI: You and Lorser, and anybody else picked up from the Post-Surrealist group?

LUNDEBERG: Possibly Merrild. I think Merrild, although I'm not positive of that. But I think that Merrild was.

DANIELI: And then was it Dorothy Miller that put together that "Americans 1942" show?

LUNDEBERG: "Americans 1942" was one of Dorothy Miller's, one of the shows she put together. She came out here with Eddie [Holger] Cahill, her husband, who was the head of the federal art projects at that time, and I don't remember just exactly how this came about, but she came to the



studio and looked at my paintings. So she actually saw-- and possibly she remembered something from, you know, the things that had gone on in New York. But that was one of those shows in which they invite each artist included to exhibit a number of paintings. I think I had, I don't know, five or six paintings in that exhibition.

DANIELI: Was that the first time you had met Dorothy Miller?

LUNDEBERG: Yes, that's when I first met her.

DANIELI: Because you mentioned when we talked before that you became good friends, I guess.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, that's the first time I ever saw her.

And then, from time to time--she didn't come out here very often, but we went to New York every once in a while--yes, we became very good friends.

DANIELI: And did you travel back to see that show?

LUNDEBERG: No, no. Let's see, 1942. . . .

DANIELI: It would have been difficult, because of the war.

LUNDEBERG: Yes. No, I didn't see it. I have the catalog of the show, of course. It was a wildly assorted show. It had all sorts of things in it. It was supposed to be sort of--eighteen artists from all over the country, mostly painters, some sculptors.

DANIELI: Saul Steinberg was in that one?

LUNDEBERG: Saul Steinberg? I don't think so.



DANIELI: The illustrator.

LUNDEBERG: Was he? Do you have that catalog?

DANIELI: I think I know it. Was Rico Lebrun in that one?

LUNDEBERG: Steinberg? Maybe. Who knows? Rico Lebrun was in that show. I think Merrild was, too.

DANIELI: Morris Graves was in that show. Maybe I made it up.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, Morris Graves and Darrel Austin.

DANIELI: Whatever happened to Darrel Austin?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, I don't know. He never did anything after that, you know, unless he's still doing the same thing. I think he's still alive. I'm sure he is.

Fletcher Martin. Let's see. Fletcher Martin.

DANIELI: No, maybe I don't know that. No, I don't think I do. I think I must be thinking of a later one.

LUNDEBERG: Merrild. She must have seen Merrild's work when she was out here, too.

DANIELI: I think that one of the most disappointing things about the County Museum was having the Merrild show, and my thinking that, "Oh, great, now we get to find out about all these people we don't know about," because they were before my time. But that was the only one.

LUNDEBERG: That was it.

DANIELI: It was so disappointing.

LUNDEBERG: Yeah, well, I'm afraid our museum at this point



couldn't care less, except for a little pocket--like Nancy Moure who's been doing this documentary thing.

Now here: Darrel Austin. Hyman Bloom. Raymond Breinin (Whatever happened to him? He was big stuff in Chicago at that time.) Steinberg's not in this one. Francis Chapin, Morris Graves was. Emma Lu Davis--that's one of her pieces. Joseph Hirsch. Donal Hord.\*

DANIELI: He was from San Diego. Did you know him?

LUNDEBERG: Donal Hord? Slightly. I'd met him. We were acquainted. He did things for the project.

DANIELI: Evidently, Al King knew him somehow.

LUNDEBERG: He probably knew him better than we did.

DANIELI: Because Al King's wife was going to be involved with some casting and some sculptures or something. But even in the late sixties, I think, they were working together.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, really? Louisa? Well, that could be. Yes, see, one, two, three, four? All but one of his things were lent by the WPA art program. Then Charles Howard, who was from San Francisco; Rico, who was in Santa Barbara at that time. Jack Levine, he's still around; and Helen Lundeborg's still around; and Fletcher Martin was the last time we ran into him at the County Museum. He was visiting out here. I think he lives back east somewhere.

---

\*We must have been looking through the "Americans 1942" catalog. [H.L.]



DANIELI: Wasn't he living in Southern California in the thirties?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, yes. Yes, I think so.

DANIELI: Because I saw him listed as a Southern California artist somewhere.

LUNDEBERG: He was, at least in the early thirties, and maybe after that.

DANIELI: What about your section in the book? What was in that show?

LUNDEBERG: All Post-Surrealist paintings, with a thing which Henry--Henry quoted this; this was a real Post-Surrealist manifesto sort of thing--which Henry quoted sort of out of context.\* Not that it matters much--it isn't too inappropriate--but he didn't indicate that it belonged to a certain time.

DANIELI: Well, I think what one tries to do is look for consistencies and not all these special things that artists make out of everything, you know. So if he thought it was a nice general statement and still applied, that. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Yes, yes. Oh, it doesn't bother me. But I was sort of astonished to see it where it was, you know. It's all right. He wrote a very nice thing for the

---

\*The "Post-Surrealist manifesto thing" was my "artist's statement" in the "Americans 1942" catalog (MOMA, foreword by Dorothy C. Miller). When I say, "Henry quoted this," I am referring to the catalog article by Henry Seldis for my retrospective exhibition at the La Jolla Museum (1971-72) in which my 1942 statement was quoted. [H.L.]



catalog.\* I love that picture with the tight curls of hair, the prim look.

DANIELI: That's a real lovely photo.

LUNDEBERG: That was one that was taken by the project photo department, you know, as publicity photos because occasionally they had requests when there was something about a mural that was being dedicated, or what have you.

DANIELI: Did you know Charles Howard at all? I've always thought his art work was real interesting.

LUNDEBERG: Charles Howard. Yes, we admired his work at that time, and he was one of the few really abstract artists around, on the West Coast.

DANIELI: Because I know I've seen this one reproduced many times, and I just keep wishing I knew more about him or knew what happened to him.

LUNDEBERG: I don't know what happened to him. He doesn't look like a very young man there. I don't know if I ever met him or not. He lived up in San Francisco.

DANIELI: He was never down here then, I guess. This [Donal Hord] is kind of like the pieces that I saw at Al King's. That was a curious kind of thing.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, there's something awfully dull about his sculpture, if you want my opinion.

DANIELI: Yeah, it's very contained, but that's all right.

---

\*Remarks about the picture "with tight curls," etc., refer to the reproduction of a photo of me in the "Americans 1942" catalog. Remarks about various artists (pp 39-42) also refer to "Americans 1942" catalog. [H.L.]



Then you were in a lot of the ["Contemporary American Painting"] shows at the University of Illinois? It looks like you were in. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Yes. For quite a few years, they had an annual show which they chose from all over the country, and one or two of their art faculty members used to come out here to prospect for--quite a few Southern California artists were in those shows at one time or another. So when I listed that, I just listed the various years in which I was included in that show. [1950, '51, '52, '55, '57, and '65]

DANIELI: It looks like you were a particular favorite of theirs.

LUNDEBERG: Well. . . . They had to give up that show for a while because insurance had become so tremendous that they couldn't afford to do it. Now, I don't know whether they've begun to do it again or not. I think they have, but less frequently.

DANIELI: Yeah, I think that's it. What about the Sao Paulo showing? I think I've seen a catalog for that. That was all West Coast art, wasn't it, that year, 1955?

LUNDEBERG: No, I don't think it was. I don't think so.

DANIELI: Well, I've seen one for that show--maybe it's for another year--that seemed to have a lot of West Coast people. Like, someone had just done Washington state, San Francisco--but I don't remember what L.A. people were involved, so maybe



I am thinking of another thing.

LUNDEBERG: I don't know that it was. It wasn't a West Coast show as such. I don't know what they did elsewhere, but here I believe they asked the County Museum director to give them some names. And I think both Lorser and I had paintings in that show.

DANIELI: One of the nicest paintings I've ever seen of yours is a very small one that Dorothy Brown has.

LUNDEBERG: That who has?

DANIELI: Dorothy Brown, out in Malibu. It's a little painting of a carnation on the edge of a ledge, with a shadow being cast.

LUNDEBERG: Lord, I've forgotten that one.

DANIELI: You don't remember that one? It's a gorgeous little painting.

LUNDEBERG: Is it dark or light? Rather dark?

DANIELI: Rather dark except for the carnation, which I think is a pink one, if I remember; it's like pink and then almost a turquoise kind of blue, or a strange kind of cobalt blue as a background. It's a lovely little painting. I think that may be one of the first ones from your earlier period that I ever saw.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, well, I did a great many very small paintings in the beginning, about 1942, even before I was off the project. In part, it was a reaction to all these great



big impersonal things that I'd been doing. You can do certain things in a very small painting that you could never do on a larger scale. The smaller I get, the more painterly, normally; the flatter and more abstract, the bigger the thing is. Because I'm not normally a painterly painter, if you know what I mean by that term--you know, manipulates the goop around. I think she has another one of mine, which has--oh, I don't know--a little glass with some little flowers in it and a shell, very opalescent in color, as I remember it. But I don't remember the carnation. I don't know.

DANIELI: I think it can't be much bigger than that.

LUNDEBERG: Well, that sounds likely.

DANIELI: A ledge, and the carnation is just hanging, I think, just over the ledge, whatever it might be, and then a shadow being cast across that, or the carnation casting its own shadow, or something--really is lovely.

LUNDEBERG: Yeah, it sounds like something I might have done, but I don't remember that specific painting.

DANIELI: Do you have names that you give to various phases or periods of your work?

LUNDEBERG: Well, the only time when I was really a program painter was when I was involved in the Post-Surrealist thing, and that went on for almost ten years. But at the end of that time, the things I started doing--these little



paintings were not with any special program in mind but just what I felt like doing. And I think that the same elements run through. Now that's very definitely a Post-Surrealist painting, I suppose.\* I don't remember the date on that; it's probably there, 1945. Yes. And you can tell from the title, [laughter] and from what's going on here that there's an idea involved.

DANIELI: Well, I was curious if paintings from more recent periods also fell into a general group that you yourself give names to.

LUNDEBERG: Well, of course, the general name for all this is "hard-edge," and then there are certain series that I did. I did a series to which this belongs.

DANIELI: Okay, then I guess that's what I'm asking, and I'm just using the wrong word. Do you have series names, then?

LUNDEBERG: Well, that one was just called Arches, number one, two, three, and so forth. I don't think that I gave any name to this. This belongs also to a series of paintings in which I was using very strict geometric forms and alignments but not with any thought of being a geometric abstractionist [No. 35, Sunny Corridor in La Jolla "Retrospective" catalog]. To my surprise I was invited to a show at the Whitney called "Geometric Abstraction [in America" (1962)]. But I hadn't thought of myself as

---

\*I was pointing either at catalog illustrations or at things on the studio wall. [H.L.]



a geometric abstractionist because I was interested in the illusions of space and dimension one could create with these absolutely flat, unmodeled geometric areas. And at that time my personal rule was, "No curves, only straight lines." Then I began to feel like doing something combining curves and the angular, and this series came out.

DANIELI: And then you went to all curves and. . . .

LUNDEBERG: And then there was a whole lot of these so-called Planets [No. 48 in La Jolla catalog], in which I wasn't so much thinking of planets, but it was a useful name to give them, and it was a marvelous format--a square with a circle. Now, a lot of people have done this sort of thing. But a square with a circle, with any kind of forms and colors you wish to manipulate within the circle. . . . So that's just one of a series, too. That, I don't know what you would call--it's a more. . . . Then I did a series also of these line and tone things, line and flat area things, which involved a suggestion of the figure, which can also be seen as a sort of landscapy thing. That's a terrible color reproduction. I'm so disappointed in the color reproductions in that catalog, because the ground there is white, not gray; it's a very fresh, pristine-looking painting [No. 55, Linear Torso in La Jolla catalog]. And it just all went gray.

DANIELI: Was there ever a point, let's say, when you were



working with the corridors or the arches, that you were working from actual subject matter and then abstracting them?

LUNDEBERG: No, no.

DANIELI: They were all inventions.

LUNDEBERG: No, they're inventions. They're abstractions suggesting real spaces, you know. But they were never done-- I don't like abstractions of real things. So all of those are inventions rather than. . . . There was a certain point, just before this series, at which the little objects-- you can see it coming on in all these flat geometrical things, in that painting and even more in some others that are not reproduced there. But there was a certain point at which I felt like dropping. . . .

Yoo-hoo! I'm still yakking.

FEITELSON: Yo!

DANIELI: Hello.

FEITELSON: How are you getting along?

DANIELI: Pretty good. How are you?

FEITELSON: Nice. You are getting along all right?

DANIELI: Yes.

LUNDEBERG: Yes.

FEITELSON: You have the whole history of California on there?

LUNDEBERG: I'm just babbling along, as Fidel asks me questions



Now there's a certain point at which these things just dropped out. I was fascinated--this, I think, is the influence of the hard-edge paintings that Lorser was doing. I would keep seeing things in his paintings which were ambiguous. You know, the positive and negative kept coming and going. But I was also fascinated with the dimensional quality. I began fooling around, and that series was the first result of that [No. 35 in La Jolla catalog]. And from there it went to the arches. Well, there's also some others which suggest landscape, but in a very geometric--flat forms. I had some shows at Paul Rivas's gallery, but that may be before you started looking.

DANIELI: I remember some that looked--and I don't know; this is probably a bad way to say it--but almost like landing strips, like flying into a space, and then you'd see these shapes laid out. I didn't know if you were actually, then, doing views from the air.

LUNDEBERG: No, not exactly. I was fascinated with the effect of, for instance, tipping a horizon and creating an extreme perspective. There is one which--I don't remember what I called it. I think I called it something nutty like Waterways, because there. . . . I did several Waterways pictures of different kinds. But actually, it was more suggestive, as you say, of a landing strip, and of that strange tipped horizon that you see from a plane



sometimes when it's coming in, when it banks a little.

DANIELI: Yes. I think the series that I saw next was the Arches, and that's why I asked the question about whether you were sketching from real things or from experiences and then abstracting them because I think they became more real to me than other geometric work of yours that I had seen.

LUNDEBERG: Which ones? The Waterways or the Arches?

DANIELI: Evidently, I knew of this sort first. And then when I saw this move, I thought, well, maybe you were being more realistic about it. But then that was because I didn't know what you'd done before. So I was curious. You know, when one comes in on someone else's career, you don't know how things grew.

LUNDEBERG: Well, I've always been fascinated by illusionism, and I was certainly interested in it there, but what I was also interested in in that one, and in the other two, was the lovely shapes of these flat areas, you know.

DANIELI: It's interesting to me that what was called design when you were getting your education, you said you didn't care for, because it was like lettering and ornamentation.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, well, it was ornamental design or alphabet design.

DANIELI: Yet these are so strong in what we would term



"design" today.

LUNDEBERG: Well, you know, the word means different things at different times. But what they called design in high school art classes was very boring to me. I was certainly much more inclined to draw peaches and pears and flowers at that time. [laughter] I didn't do too well with the design.

DANIELI: What about being able to tie the Waterways series and the Arches into Southern California subject matter? Is that fair to call it that?

LUNDEBERG: Well, I think one is influenced by what one looks at all the time, you know? I think I might have had possibly different inclinations if I had stayed in Chicago. But. . . .



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

JUNE 4, 1974

DANIELI: Do the comment again about how you are interested by what you see around you.

LUNDEBERG: Well, I think a painter must be influenced by what he sees, all the time, or even by what he conceives is around him, don't you think? Because I've been looking all my life, even though I didn't start painting until I was twenty-two. It was one of my favorite occupations. I'm terribly visual-minded. And when I was a kid and we went for the Sunday afternoon drives that people went for in those days, or went anywhere, I was always in the back seat, looking at everything. It seems to me it would be natural for a painter to be influenced by what's visually available, that it would make a difference whether you'd lived in a rather wide-open and sunny country, or in a gray, old gloomy city, you know. So I would think that that would make a difference.

DANIELI: Were you in the Arches series conscious of trying to do Southern California light?

LUNDEBERG: No, no, I wasn't. I wasn't. But I've always liked those forms, and they lend themselves so beautifully to the kind of painting I wanted to do, the combination of the straight line and the more or less subtle curves. If you notice, none of these arches is complete.



[No. 42 in the La Jolla catalog] What I really liked was, for instance, this strange shape, and this, and even this, which comes up and widens a little bit because you are looking under it slightly. So I wasn't really thinking about Southern California architecture, although I know arches are all over the place. And the funny thing is this: that in some paintings, not in that one, I used a long column which goes like this--it doesn't go up into a round arch, it goes off like that--and now I see that kind of form in contemporary architecture in several places not far from here, you know. Philip Johnson, I think, has used a lot of that kind of sort of archy architecture. But I wasn't thinking about that especially, because, as I say, these are inventions and not from anything, not abstractions of actual things.

DANIELI: I think the reason I wanted to talk with you about that was that I didn't want to, say, make some kind of commitment in print, saying, you know, this was Southern California, and then find out you'd just been to Italy. That would just shoot that whole idea out from under me. [Like if] I'm looking at one of those so-called airport pictures, and I'm thinking, "It's Los Angeles Airport," and it was somewhere else that you. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Yes, I didn't even have airports in mind, but once it was done I saw what you see in it. At that



time I was feeling like doing things which were very light, airy, expansive, a little tipped off the solid. . . .

Incidentally, I did all these Planets before the moon walks. I haven't done any more since.

DANIELI: Stayed away from them purposely?

LUNDEBERG: Now anything like that seems too topical.

We've seen so many beautiful colored photographs of the earth from the moon, and so forth and so on.

DANIELI: It becomes one of those real good subjects to stay away from.

LUNDEBERG: Yes. But I did a whole series of these, no two alike. That was a lot of fun. No, I meant the Planets, not that. [No. 51, Oracle, La Jolla catalog] No, that's a sort of freaky one for me.

DANIELI: If I remember, you also did prints of that series, didn't you?

LUNDEBERG: Yes, I did.

DANIELI: The silk screens.

LUNDEBERG: There's one right up here. The silk-screen thing was sort of an experiment. While I didn't do any of the actual designs that I'd used for the Planet paintings, I used the idea. Of course, the silk screen has to be--you design each color, a drawing for each color, and so on, and it takes a screen for each shape, so that it seemed like a logical thing to do.



DANIELI: Did you like the prints?

LUNDEBERG: I'm not too mad about working that way. I didn't print my own silk screens; Gene Gill printed them. And he did a beautiful job. But again, it's sort of working at one remove from yourself. You go to somebody else's workshop, you check colors and so on. And it isn't as direct as painting. I really prefer painting.

DANIELI: Can we go somewhere with that? What is it that you like about painting? What is it that you like about the act of painting?

LUNDEBERG: Well, I guess I do enjoy the actual thing. You know, all these things are drawn on a canvas with tape. And there's even a certain satisfaction in the act of doing that. I like working with things, with the actual material. Also I like the fact, in painting, that I have complete control (if I make a mistake, I can correct it, right then and there), that there isn't any guessing as to what's going to come out, as there is when you make a design for a print and somebody else prints it. Yes, I like the act of painting. I like the whole involvement with the thing itself, even though there are times when I wish I could think something onto the canvas. You know, you have a marvelous vision of what you can do; it doesn't always come out that way.

DANIELI: Do you usually start with drawings as a basis



for a painting, or do you start with. . . ? I think Lorser suggested last time that you start with small paintings as a basis for. . . .

LUNDEBERG: I don't do that very--I do that less and less. What I did a great deal. . . . (That [Oracle] was inspired by a blot on a saucer of paint that had gelled, but of course altered, but that's not true color either. It's not nearly as blue and gloomy as that.) I start usually with a little--what you might call the thumbnail sketch, you know, no bigger than that. And I made sketches for a lot of things with those marker inks. They're pretty garish colors, except for the grays. But you can work one over another, so that you approximate something that's. . . . Many of the Planets were designed that way. But they're little, little, little things. I don't like to work the thing out too completely before I start the canvas. I've never been able to figure out, for instance, how these photorealists can bear to paint the things they do; I should think they'd be so bored that they'd be ready to scream before they get through. Well, did you ever try to copy a painting of your own because it had been damaged, or for some, you know, extraneous reason? That's boring, too. You've already had all the fun, and it's just a matter of the labor of putting the thing together again. So, no, I don't work them out too carefully.



If it's a little painting, it's sort of a sloppy one.

Come to think of it, I don't know what Lorser was thinking of. But for some of these, I did a not-too-complete little painting, to see what I was going to get, on a scale about like that.

DANIELI: Is the tape the first mark on the canvas, or do you start with pencil or drawing first?

LUNDEBERG: No, the tape. The tape. Once I have a design. The tape is marvelous because you can put it on, and if you don't get the right curve, or if you don't like this proportion, you can take it off and start all over again, and your canvas is clean. . . . See, one reason for doing that is that in this, for instance, that's the white of the canvas; that's not painted white.\* If you're using your canvas as one of your colors, as I did here, for instance, you need to keep it clean. Pencil or charcoal gets awfully messy; it can even show through the paint. I like to do it with tape. There's a certain pleasure in it, and there's a certain bigness in it; you can't niggle with a piece of tape when you're putting it on. And since there are all widths of tapes, it works very well.

DANIELI: I think most viewers would agree that the kind of colors you've used have been the major strength or the major kind of contribution that you've made. I'm wondering

---

\*Possibly Aegean Light, 1973, 60 X 60 inches, was hanging on the studio wall. [H.L.]



where your sensibility or your sensitivity towards color might have come from, because even the early ones, even though they're involved with value, look even in color prints to have an incredible amount of color in them. They aren't just value painting.

LUNDEBERG: Well, I don't know; you can only explain such things to a certain extent. I've always worked with a closely related palette, trying to get as much color as possible out of a very small range of colors. I can't stand paintings that have the whole rainbow in them; it's not my idea of color, but. . . . For instance, I like to work with maybe black, white, umber, and blue, or a green, as I did in this one, here. It's amazing, if you start out quiet, how significant a little purer color can be. I try to vary my palette from time to time, not to get into too terrible a rut. This one isn't quite as purple as that, but it does use violets and ochres, and so on. That's a little more colorful. In this sort of thing, it seems that one can afford to become a little more garish.

DANIELI: Now, are you thinking consciously that you're controlling the color by limiting the selection, or that you're somehow releasing more? Because there are some people who would say, "You used to work with three or four colors. . . ."

LUNDEBERG: Well, both. I mean, it's a great, great, great



way of attaining a harmony, but it's also a great way to create attention, by breaking that closeness somewhere in the canvas. I hardly ever use a pure color. That's fairly pure, that blue, but knocked down with white and probably a little black. But I can never use a primary color straight; it's just not my language. I don't think color theories are worth a bean myself. I've seen the most God-awful paintings made by people who had elaborate color theories. It's like any formula, you know. The formulae are made after the fact anyway, and they don't do you much good as a recipe.

DANIELI: What about the colors that you used in various periods, related to Southern California color, in terms of, like, light, or the land? Do you get involved in that at all?

LUNDEBERG: I really cannot identify it. For the most part--no, I can't.

Now, there was a time in the early sixties, around 1960-61, when I was working in a very dark palette.

(None of those things. It was as somber as that, but darker. That's not a good reproduction, by the way.

[No. 38 in La Jolla catalog?]) And I became fascinated with this thing. It doesn't come from nature, and it doesn't come from any emotional mood, either, because I was in a perfectly happy state of mind. People began to say, "What's the matter with her? Is she in a depression or something?"



because I was working in black, umber, gray, and so forth. And to me it was perfectly beautiful. You sit and you look at your own canvas, you know, and you see all the subtle relationships. But to somebody else, it looks just plain gloomy, sometimes. And I went through a state of that. Then, having mined that vein for a while, I began working with the white of the canvas, and they perked up no end. [laughter] Also I think the medium you work with makes a difference in your sense of color, too. I didn't use the acrylics until 1965, when I began doing that Planet series, and I must say it makes some of my old canvases look sort of greasy and gloomy to me, because I've gotten used to the freshness of this--the nice, dry texture. And, of course, you can work in gloomy colors with acrylic, but it seems rather a foolish thing to do.

DANIELI: Was that a difficult transition, to move from oil to acrylic?

LUNDEBERG: Well, I had thought that I did not want to use a liquid paint. I was so used to. . . . See, those earlier flat area paintings were done with oil paint right out of the tube, applied with a sort of stipple technique and then brushed, each area in one direction, so that it would have an even, mat texture when it dried. I saw Lorser working with enamel, and it seemed to me such a splashy sort of material to work with. Then I had tried



some tube acrylic, and I didn't enjoy that; I just tried it on a small scale. And it seemed to be always drying up for me, and so on; it was a mess. But our friend June Harwood was using acrylics, and I liked the texture of her canvases, and I thought. . . . Now, she was using a spray gun for some of those things, but I want no part of that. So I got some liquid acrylic and started working with it, and now I'm addicted to it. I love it. I like the way it works; I like the way it looks. And I think it's a more reliable medium than oil, the way I was using it, because that's a very fragile surface, you know, oil without any medium.

DANIELI: Do you distinguish between the use of the word design and the use of the word composition, or do you prefer neither?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, really, when I said that I disliked the design classes, that's what they were called, and it meant a certain sort of thing, you know.

DANIELI: Yeah. I was thinking if people, say, call it. . . . Are you offended, say, if someone comes up and tells you that they like your design?

LUNDEBERG: No, I'm not offended. I might use a different word. As a matter of fact, I like the words pictorial structure better than design or composition, but I think we all mean the same thing, maybe. Of course, structure takes



in a lot of things; it takes in everything.

DANIELI: I wondered if we could talk about either time spent painting or about production in your current schedule: how many hours you put in, or how many days a week--that sort of thing.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, I couldn't possibly tell you that because it depends on other things, you know, on what comes up. I don't work from five to nine, or two to six, or whatever. I like to work in the morning rather than in the afternoon. I'm a daytime painter. I think you can see it in the paintings. I mean, they're really daylight paintings. But I don't like to work at night.

DANIELI: Are you real compulsive about it? Evidently not in terms of timekeeping, time schedules, but do you feel bad when you're away from it?

LUNDEBERG: Yes, if I'm away too long. It depends on how hot I am on a project, you know. Sometimes I produce a great deal in a rather short time, and sometimes not so much. So I can't really give you any schedules. You know, even if you just have a cat that has to be taken to the vet's, I mean, you have to do it, even if it's your painting time. Things break into the. . . .

DANIELI: I was just wondering about the kind of commonly held attitude that if it's hard-edge and fairly immaculate, that then along with that would go attitudes about regular



hours in the studio painting, and all of that. That's kind of a clichéd fallacy.

LUNDEBERG: No, I don't think that has anything to do with it. I really don't. Well, some people probably look at a painting with as few forms in it and colors in it as that and think that it must be a very fast job, you know. It's not. It went through all kinds of changes. Once I have my linear, you know, my shape design, that's one thing, and that stays. But the colors and the values don't always come out the way I hope on the first application. And then comes the real work.

DANIELI: Because the relationships are always worked out on the canvas, not ahead of. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Yes, I think they have to be because the scale makes a difference. Also, the difference in medium makes a difference. As I say, I don't make a little painting--very rarely--to do a large painting. So that really has to be worked out. I have a general idea, and you have to start somewhere.

DANIELI: You were saying you would reject color theories, but don't you do sample mixtures ahead of time?

LUNDEBERG: Yes, sometimes. Oh, yes, sure.

DANIELI: You do little splotches or color chips.

LUNDEBERG: Yes. I have an idea in my head of what I'd like to do, but I like to sort of see something, too,



before I start putting it on.

DANIELI: Do you want to deal at all--and you can reject it if you want to--do you want to deal at all with questions about women's art, or the women's art movement? You can pass if you want to. Some people find it a real sticky thing to talk about.

LUNDEBERG: Well, I'm not involved in anything. I've never felt especially discriminated against as a woman artist. I've never wanted to join any women's organization.

DANIELI: Women Painters of the West? [laughter]

LUNDEBERG: And the idea of women segregating themselves just doesn't appeal to me at all. That's ridiculous. Now I'll have all the ladies in Womanspace down on my head. The idea of that beehive of female activity sort of horrifies me. Is Edie involved in this?

DANIELI: She was, and Womanspace was going to close, so she thought she would like. . . .

LUNDEBERG: You say it's going to close?

DANIELI: Womanspace? Yes.

LUNDEBERG: It is?

DANIELI: Which is just one.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, I thought they called that whole building down there now Womanspace.

DANIELI: No, it's the Women's Building. There are those groups there that want to have women's art for women, and



that's it; and Womanspace, I think, wanted to show women to the public.

LUNDEBERG: Well, yes, what else do they want to have the damn thing for?

DANIELI: As I say, there are groups that think there ought to be women's art for a women's audience, and just let it go at that. Which is interesting.

LUNDEBERG: That's beyond my comprehension. However. . . .

DANIELI: So Edie got in and thought she'd maybe try and help young women students or something or get more interesting art shown down there. But it turns out they just ran out of money. So she's going to a meeting tonight where they sign the official papers to close it. I thought the most valuable section of that unfortunately didn't make it.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, well, I would certainly think that that would be, that the object would be to show women's work to the public, although I don't think it's all that difficult for women to get shown, any more than it is for other artists. Do you think so, really?

DANIELI: From the stories I hear; yes.

LUNDEBERG: Really? I don't know. It's never hit me. And a funny thing is, up here at the Los Angeles Art Association, in most shows there are more women than men. Nobody pays any attention to it, but just for fun, I go around and count noses sometimes.



DANIELI: When we were in New York in December, one of the women artist groups had gone around and stuck things on gallery walls, on the outside, on the street; and they gave percentages of women in some of the galleries, like two women out of fifteen, or. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Well, the question is, what's the reason for that? Is it discrimination against women, or are there other reasons?

DANIELI: Then there have been collections of stories of how women artists were treated when they brought their works into gallery dealers and things like that. Sometimes I can back off and go, "Well, those aren't any more horrible than I suppose if I took my paintings around to show to gallery dealers." But it's interesting that they could build up a case. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Well, it's no fun to take your things around to show to galleries, to dealers, and so forth, because there are many too many artists for the number of galleries there are. A dealer can handle only so many people. I don't know. I mean, I've never felt this for myself. And as I say, I'm not a joiner anyway. The idea of an organization of women painters never appealed to me. Heaven knows, there are some things to be said for some of the women's rights that women's lib has been working for, but a lot of nonsense goes with it, too, I think. Well, I guess that should be



my last word on the subject. [laughter]

DANIELI: I was going to ask you if, in looking at your art in comparison to other hard-edge art, do you see yours as more feminine?

LUNDEBERG: I don't know. I don't think about it in that way. I mean, art is art, you know. There have been some male painters whose work could be, perhaps--and I'm not implying that they are not masculine males--could be called feminine in comparison to other things. So I don't know. [tape recorder turned off] You know, after four o'clock, you could get a ticket for being parked there at all. I meant to mention it before, but I forgot about it.

DANIELI: I was curious if you'd been ever involved in any kind of sports activities.

LUNDEBERG: Sports? Heavens, no.

DANIELI: No sports at all?

LUNDEBERG: No, never. What on earth would make you ask that?

DANIELI: Because I found out that people do strange things, like fly and ski, which is not so strange, except then I was finding out that they felt, yes, there was some relationship with their art work.

LUNDEBERG: Well, I'll tell you, there was a time, when I had just learned to drive a car, when I thought I'd like to learn to fly a plane, too. But I never got around to that.



DANIELI: Do you do a lot of reading?

LUNDEBERG: Yes, always have. I was a haunter of libraries when I was a kid, and I still like to read, all sorts of things.

DANIELI: Art history? Or is that Lorser's area?

LUNDEBERG: That's Lorser's department, really. I do sometimes, but that's. . . . I like to read all sorts of other things, too, which don't interest Lorser.

DANIELI: Like?

LUNDEBERG: Various kinds of literature--letters, biography, novels. Even poetry, sometimes. History. Sometimes art history, although I must say with art books I mostly look at the pictures and don't read the text. But yeah, I've always been a bookworm.

DANIELI: Do you think that might be related to the kind of contemplative attitude that I see in the paintings?

LUNDEBERG: I don't know. Possibly.

DANIELI: You don't see that. . . .

LUNDEBERG: I think--yeah, as a state, or a bent of mind, as it were, probably is. I hadn't thought about it especially. I don't even like to title my paintings unless I come up with something tremendous, like The Wind that Blew the Sky Away. [laughter] That's an oldie. Yes, as a matter of fact, I thought when I was still going to school I might be some kind of a writer, a minor poet,



as it were. You know the funny thing is, I belonged to a little group in school that published a little annual book of stories, poems, sketches, and so forth, and the things I wrote at that time were really very visually oriented. They were full of visual things. So it's a good thing I got off on another tack.

DANIELI: Have you written since you were in school?

LUNDEBERG: No.

DANIELI: Do you keep any kind of diaries?

LUNDEBERG: No.

DANIELI: I would have bet you did.

LUNDEBERG: You would? No, no, I don't. Once in a while someone asks for a statement about my painting, and I painfully do that. Do you remember--no you probably don't; you're too young--but during the fifties, I think it was, at the time of the Illinois annuals, which you mentioned there, which are in my list of exhibitions, there was a fashion for making long-winded, flowery, pseudophilosophical statements about painting. And those old catalogs, of which I have a bunch, are full of them. But no long-winded ones by me--mine are very short, one little paragraph--but some of them were really something. It's just no use looking at the paintings after reading all that; they couldn't possibly come up to it.

DANIELI: Have you ever been involved--well, I don't know--



either more actively or more passively with art criticism, or do you have a response to that as an area of activity?

LUNDEBERG: You mean personally? Actively, no. No.

DANIELI: But personally, as an artist, Jules Langsner was a friend, but then most artists are agin it.

LUNDEBERG: No. I'll say this about Jules: He used to annoy me a little sometimes. He would come in and he would look around--now, Lorser always hangs my things all over this room--and he would look, but he wouldn't say a word. But whenever he wrote something as a review of an exhibition or something, he wrote very beautifully, and I felt that he understood very well what I was doing, which was very nice. But he was a silent man when it came to--but it was just as well. Sometimes critics say all sorts of wonderful things, and when it comes to writing it, they feel they've said it already, you know, and nothing comes out.

DANIELI: Has there ever been a time when a review or criticism has been of interest to you, or value to you?

LUNDEBERG: Well, I've been very lucky with critical writings and reviews and so forth. I've never really been clobbered. Sometimes I have taken exception to--I felt that what the reviewer liked was not specially what I liked in my work, that there was some misunderstanding there. But in general, I've had no really bad experiences. I see criticism sometimes these days in newspapers and magazines that seems



to me unnecessarily destructive, really mean, or where the critic is enjoying himself being clever and cute, you know, but at the expense of the artist. I think that's too bad. If a thing is too bad, why write about it? And if it's something that people need to understand better, why not write something which will help them? Doesn't that make sense? And, of course, part of criticism, I guess, is classifying things, which. . . .

DANIELI: Another one of my standard questions is whether you might have traveled, either in this country or elsewhere?

LUNDEBERG: I'm mostly an armchair traveler--you know, back and forth to San Francisco, years ago, not very recently; back and forth across the United States to New York. But I've never been out of this country, except in imagination.

DANIELI: The last one, finally--and we'll do it a couple of different ways, if it will help, but I'll just see if you have any ideas--if you'd care to comment at any level on reality versus fantasy.

LUNDEBERG: Wow, that's quite a subject.

DANIELI: I'll tell you afterwards, you know, what the references are, but can you do anything with that?

LUNDEBERG: Reality versus fantasy. No, I think you'd better tell me what you have in mind, because it's one of those subjects that means many things to many people.



DANIELI: I'm thinking here of the standard East Coast criticism that somehow Southern California is some kind of lotus land, that it has an air of unreality or fantasy about it. At its most intense level, it gets to be like The Day of the Locust, as viewed by Nathanael West, or something. It's a very favorite kind of theme that East Coast and New York critics find in Los Angeles life.

LUNDEBERG: I know. Well, there are fantastic aspects to Los Angeles in appearance and in. . . . I remember when Andrew Ritchie was out here. I don't remember what the occasion was; he was visiting someone, maybe a collector. Lorser was there and Lorser offered to give him a lift back to his hotel. I don't know what he was here for, perhaps to jury a show. They drove along Sunset Boulevard, and he was looking out the window, and he said, "It's surreal! It's fantastic!" He looked at all the things which we are so used to that we just pass right over them. Of course, when I saw some eastern cities, I realized why it looked so strange to him. But I think a lot of nonsense has been written about Los Angeles, too. You know, people come here from somewhere else. They don't really live here; they don't really know what people's lives are like--they see crazy things like the bun with the hot dog up here on La Cienega, or miniature Spanish villas and English castles, and so forth; and they think it's crazy-land.



But a lot of people live just as ordinary lives here as they do anywhere else, only more comfortably, I think.

DANIELI: I was wondering if that comfort isn't the thing that disturbs a lot of people?

LUNDEBERG: That what? That disturbs them?

DANIELI: Yeah. That if you aren't struggling against the snow and the subways or something--that, you know, that's reality.

LUNDEBERG: Oh, pooh. They can have their reality, as far as I'm concerned. [laughter] There are all kinds of reality. I'm not sure what's meant by it.

DANIELI: How about pictorially, in reference to your own work?

LUNDEBERG: Oh, well, I've never considered myself a realist, but I sort of dislike that word fantasy; it sounds like, you know, the Disney fairy with her wings fluttering. It bothers me. I've never been interested in realism or naturalism as such, and I mean, you can see that, you can look right through from the beginning to now.

DANIELI: What about some comments by you on surrealism, or your Post-Surrealism?

LUNDEBERG: Well, Post-Surrealism was an effort to make a reasonable use of more or less normal processes that go on in the mind, not the fantastic dream sort of thing. It was only sparked by European surrealism. The alternate



name for Post-Surrealism was "subjective classicism."

The pictorial organization was supposed to be subjective and to involve association of ideas and so on, but still it was a structured thing; it was no automatic recording, oh, what Lorser calls illustration of dreams. And to me, European surrealism is a completely foreign sort of thing. It involves cultural things which are not familiar or part of my background. So that (Post-Surrealism) was truly an American phenomenon, which in the beginning was really Lorser's idea.

DANIELI: I do know that in the late thirties, and I guess clear past World War II, there were various artists who were grouped however loosely under the term "magic realism." Were there associations or relationships there?

LUNDEBERG: No. "Magic realism" to me means--oh, Lord, I can't think of any examples now. But no, there's no connection, I'm sure. It was, I know, a very meticulous sort of rendering of these things, which didn't--I mean, Post-Surrealism didn't have anything in common with that. That was not essential to it at all. Of course, if you're going to evoke ideas and associations which will form the structure of a painting, you need figurative, you need representational forms, but they don't necessarily have to be magic realism. No, there's no connection there that I can think of--if I understand what magic realism is.



DANIELI: I think it was that the term was used, and I guess catalogs were done and shows arranged, and then I don't know anybody really believed in it very much as a . . . .

LUNDEBERG: I don't think that it was ever a major sort of thing. I think it was sort of a little side issue, myself.

DANIELI: What about the amounts of what I would see--and again, my view is distorted by knowing just reproductions of your earlier work--but what about amounts that I either see or sense in there of romanticism or nostalgia? Do you respond favorably to those words?

LUNDEBERG: I don't mind romanticism so much, but that word nostalgia! [laughter] It turned up in the headline of crits of my work in both the Daily News and the Times once upon a time. And it was meant favorably, but it sort of throws me off. I don't care for that.

DANIELI: What do you like then about romanticism that you don't like about nostalgia?

LUNDEBERG: Well, of course, there are various ways you can interpret romanticism, too. Because romanticism in the nineteenth century meant something which hasn't anything to do with me. But to say that something is romantic rather than realistic--I guess I'd fall on the side of the romanticism.

I had a funny experience with a woman out in Ontario



who bought one of my Wind that Blew the Sky Away paintings. There are three of those, a little one (which I've lost sight of), the medium-sized one, and then the big, rather abstract one that was in the show at the Carnegie one year.\* Anyway, she saw this, I think, at one of those Chaffey shows and bought it. I don't think she'd ever--she was a retired schoolteacher--I don't think she had ever bought a painting in her life. I wondered why on earth, what on earth it was which attracted her enough to want that particular painting. Well, after the sale had been made, she wrote me a little note which said, "Tell me something about how you came to paint this and what"--you know, the usual stuff. So I wrote back to her, and in my letter I said, "Well, it's an imaginative painting, and I painted something that I would like to see." Not too much later, I ran into her somewhere, and she said, "I had to laugh. You said you painted something you would like to see. I saw it." Now, if you knew that painting, you'd know why I thought the poor woman had lost her buttons, until I found out what it was all about. Because I don't know if you ever saw that painting: it's a sort of flattish, slightly rolling landscape, and then the sky--there's a play of clouds. . . .

---

\*The largest version of The Wind that Blew the Sky Away was shown in the 1952 Pittsburgh International exhibition at the Carnegie. The Chaffey show was one of a series of annual shows put on by the Chaffey Community Art Association at Chaffey College in Ontario, California, 194?-195?. The medium-sized Wind referred to was painted in 1947. [H.L.]



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

JUNE 4, 1974

LUNDEBERG: . . . suns always look like moons, because the light's all sort of silver and the sky is a silvery blue. But at one side it's rolled back like a curtain, and you see a black night sky with a few little sparks of stars in it and a shadow falling all over the land, all over the land from this, and one little lonesome tree. She had seen--on a trip down from Alaska by sea, I think--some such effect in a fog, and apparently that trip had also had some romantic association for her because she giggled a little. But she said, "I saw it." I don't know what this is apropos of; I don't know what we were talking about--romanticism, but. . . .

DANIELI: I suppose the word nostalgia is used just simply because there have been details in paintings, like photographs and old stamps, and that sort of period reference. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Perhaps the general sort of moody tone of those things. I haven't had any "nostalgia" since I went hard-edge, which some people resented no end. They considered me a--what do you call it? What's the word I want?

DANIELI: Renegade.

LUNDEBERG: Renegade. That's the word. The people who liked the earlier things couldn't stand it at first.

DANIELI: Do you see that much difference in them?



LUNDEBERG: No. No, I don't. I mean, the general tone is the same--perhaps a little gayer in some of the later hard-edge things of that period and the lyrical, linear things like the figure pieces. But no, I don't see that much difference. But then, you know, you have to do what you have to do. No, I think if you go through that [La Jolla] catalog there's sort of a prevailing mood, even though the forms change, the style changes, the medium changes. And besides, the change came about sort of naturally and gradually, from this to that. There are paintings even closer to that which were still a little more realistic, if you want to call it that. That is a very nice painting;\* it came out so yellow and so washed out. This is quite deep and rich in here. If I had it to do over again, I'd leave out just a little bit of that. I think while my first influences were Renaissance, a little bit of Cézanne's ideas got into the--you must do something with every darn corner of the picture; you musn't leave any blank spaces. I think there's a little too much in it.

DANIELI: I get the feeling that--from what I can gather--Cézannism was fairly strong in Southern California. Like his theories--watered down, you know, third- and fourth- and fifthhand--were a thing that was going around.

---

\*Probably the 1933 Self-Portrait on cover of La Jolla catalog. [H.L.]



LUNDEBERG: Yes, it was about as near as many painters came in the thirties to giving a nod to what was going on in the rest of the world, you know.

DANIELI: But somehow it seemed kind of not too difficult to do, say, a traditional landscape, but then sneak in a little Cézanne in there, too.

LUNDEBERG: Um-hmm, or still lifes. Oh, all the still lifes! [laughter] Of course I like doing still life, in my own peculiar way. That painting up there I finished just recently.\* I have the feeling for going back to some figurative things again, but it's pretty flat, compared to Cézanne.

DANIELI: Maybe you can get those old appreciators back again, the ones that liked the. . . .

LUNDEBERG: Oh, I don't know what's happened to them in the meantime. That was a long time ago.

DANIELI: Either that, or you can offend a whole new group that will call you a renegade again.

LUNDEBERG: Yes, exactly!

---

\*Probably a small painting titled One and One-Half. [H.L.]



# INDEX

Abel, Jean, 11  
 American Legion, 27  
 Arensberg, Walter,  
     17-19  
 Austin, Darrel, 38,  
     39  
  
 Bloom, Hyman, 39  
 Brancusi, Constantin,  
     18, 23  
 Breinin, Raymond, 39  
 Bridgman, George, 12  
 Brooklyn Museum, 35-  
     36  
     -"Post-Surrealism"  
       exhibition, 35-36  
 Brown, Dorothy, 43  
  
 Cahill, Holger (Eddie),  
     36  
 California Art Club,  
     16, 17  
 Carnegie Institute, 75  
 Cézanne, Paul, 77-78  
 Chaffey College, 75  
 Chaffey Community Art  
     Association, 75  
 Chapin, Francis, 39  
 Chirico, Giorgio de,  
     18  
 Clements, Grace, 11,  
     16  
 Copley, Claire, 21  
 Copley, William, 20-  
     21  
 Copley Gallery, 19-  
     21  
  
 Davis, Emma Lu, 39  
 Deutsch, Boris, 15,  
     34  
     -Mural at Termi-  
       nal Annex post  
       office, 34  
 Disney, Walt, 72  
 Dixon, Maynard, 34

-Mural at Canoga  
     Park post office,  
     34  
 Duchamp, Marcel, 18,  
     22-23  
  
 Edison Junior High  
     School, 25  
 Eng, Helga, 7-8  
 Ernst, Max, 19, 20,  
     21  
  
 Feitelson, Lorser, 1,  
     15, 18, 22, 34,  
     67, 71, 73  
     -as art teacher, 11,  
     12, 13, 16  
     -as painter, 17, 32,  
     33, 48, 59  
     -exhibitions, 21, 36,  
     43  
  
 Gill, Gene, 54  
 Goldstein, Phillip.  
     See Guston,  
     Philip  
 Graves, Morris, 38,  
     39  
 Gris, Juan, 20, 23  
 Guggenheim, Peggy,  
     19  
 Guston, Philip, 16  
  
 Hart, Shaffner & Marx,  
     3-4  
 Harwood, June, 60  
 Hirsch, Joseph, 39  
 Hord, Donal, 39, 41  
 Howard, Charles, 39,  
     41  
  
 Independent Artists,  
     14  
  
 Johnson, Philip, 52



Kadish, Reuben, 16  
 Kendall Company, 4  
 King, Al, 32-33, 39,  
     41  
 King, Louisa (Mrs.  
     Al), 39  
 Kistler, Lynton, 29-  
     31  
 Klee, Paul, 23  
 Kosa, Emil, Jr., 17  
 Krasnow, Peter, 11,  
     15  
 Krasnow, Mrs. Peter,  
     15  
  
 Labaudt, Lucien, 16  
Ladies' Home Journal,  
     9  
 La Jolla Museum of  
     Art  
     -Lundeberg exhibition  
         and catalog, 40,  
         45-46, 77  
 Langsner, Jules, 16,  
     69  
 Lauritz, Paul, 17  
 Lebrun, Rico, 38, 39  
 Leddy, Helen, 9  
 Levine, Jack, 39  
 Long Beach Museum of  
     Art, 15  
 Los Angeles, Art As-  
     sociation, 22,  
     64  
 Los Angeles County  
     Museum of Art,  
     13, 14-15, 38-  
     39, 43  
     -Knud Merrild ex-  
         hibition, 38  
Los Angeles Daily  
     News, 74  
 Los Angeles Municipal  
     Art Gallery  
     (Barnsdall),  
     15  
Los Angeles Times,  
     74  
 Lundeberg, Frederick,  
     3-4, 7  
  
 Lundeberg, Inez S.  
     6, 7-8  
 Lundeberg, Selma Ed-  
     mund, 2, 3  
  
 MacDonald-Wright,  
     Stanton, 32-  
     33  
 Magritte, René, 20  
 Martin, Fletcher, 38,  
     39-40  
 Matta Echaurren, Ro-  
     berto, 20  
 Merida, Carlos, 20  
 Merrild, Knud, 16,  
     36, 38  
 Miller, Dorothy, 36-  
     37, 40  
 Moure, Nancy Dustin  
     Wall, 13, 39  
     -Artists' Clubs and  
         Exhibitions in Los  
         Angeles before 1930,  
         13  
     -The Dictionary of  
         Art and Artists in  
         Southern California  
         before 1930, 13  
 Murphy, Lawrence, 11,  
     12-13  
 Museum of Modern Art,  
     New York, 35-  
     41  
     -"Americans 1942,"  
         36-41  
     -"Fantastic Art,  
         Dada and Surrealism,"  
         35-36  
  
 Painters and Sculptors  
     Club, 17  
 Pasadena City College,  
     10  
 Paul Elder Bookshop,  
     22  
 Paul Rivas Gallery, 48  
 Philadelphia Museum  
     of Art, 18-19  
 Picasso, Pablo, 20  
 Ployard, John, 20



Post-Surrealist group,  
16-17, 35, 40,  
44-45, 72-73  
Putzel, Howard, 22

Ritchie, Andrew, 71  
Roosevelt, Franklin  
Delano, 35

San Francisco Museum  
of Art  
- "Post-Surrealism,"  
36

Sao Paulo Bienal,  
42-43

Saturday Evening Post,  
9

Scheyer, Galka, 23  
Seldis, Henry, 40  
Steinberg, Saul, 37-  
38

Stendahl, Al, 19  
Stendahl, Earl, 19  
Stendahl Galleries,  
19

Stickney Memorial  
Art School,  
9, 10-13

Tanguy, Yves, 20

United States

- Department of the  
Treasury art pro-  
ject, 34
- Federal Art Project  
(FAP), 26, 34, 36
- Post offices, mu-  
rals
  - Canoga Park, Cal-  
ifornia, 34
  - Terminal Annex,  
Los Angeles, 34
- Public Works of Art  
Project (PWAP), 34
- Works Progress Ad-  
ministration (WPA),  
24, 25-35, 39, 41,  
43

University of Illinois,  
- "Contemporary Amer-  
ican Painting," 42,  
68

Villon, Jacques, 23

West, Nathanael  
- Day of the Locust,  
The, 71

Westways (periodical),  
34

Whitney Museum of Amer-  
ican Art  
- "Geometric Abstraction  
in America," 45-46  
Womanspace, 63-64  
Women's Building, 63-  
64



INDEX OF WORKS  
MENTIONED IN THE TEXT

Aegean Light, 56  
Arches series, 45,  
47-48, 49,  
50, 52  
Arches #4 (Number  
42 in La  
Jolla cata-  
log), 52

Interior with Mirror  
(Number 38 in  
La Jolla cata-  
log), 58

Linear Torso, 46

Mural at Canoga Park  
High School,  
30  
Mural at Centinela  
Park, 30  
Mural at Fullerton  
City Hall, 26  
Mural at Los Angeles  
County Hall of  
Records, 25-  
26, 32  
Mural at Patriotic  
Hall, 27-28  
Mural at Venice High  
School, 26-27  
Mural at Washington  
High School,  
30

Oracle, 53, 55

Paintings at John  
Marshall  
High School,  
31-32

Planets series, 46,  
53, 55, 59

Self-Portrait (1933),  
77

Sunny Corridor, 45, 48

Waterways, 48, 50

Wind that Blew the Sky  
Away, The, 67, 75









